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THE SAVAGE DEEP

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FIGHT- OR DIE!

IN DECEMBER 1940, THE BRITISH ARMY MOVED FORWARD FROM ITS POSITION AT MERSA MATRUH AND, TWO DAYS LATER, ENTERED SIDI BARRANI, CAPTURING 20,000 ITALIAN PRISONERS.

OKAY, TONY?
LET'S ROLL -- AND
THE BET'S ON! THE
TROOP THAT BAGS
THE MOST TANKS
GETS THE FIRST
LEAVE IN CAIRO!

FOR TWO ARTILLERY CAPTAINS, TONY GIBBS AND "COOKY" COOK, IT WAS THE START OF AN ADVENTURE WHICH WAS TO PROVE THAT NO MAN CAN EXPECT TO CONTROL HIS OWN DESTINY IN THE VIOLENT TIMES OF WAR.

Chapter 1. *The Wager*

THE WAR WAS STILL YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE AN ADVENTURE. IT STILL SEEMED A JOKE TO BET ON KILLING ENEMY TANKS.

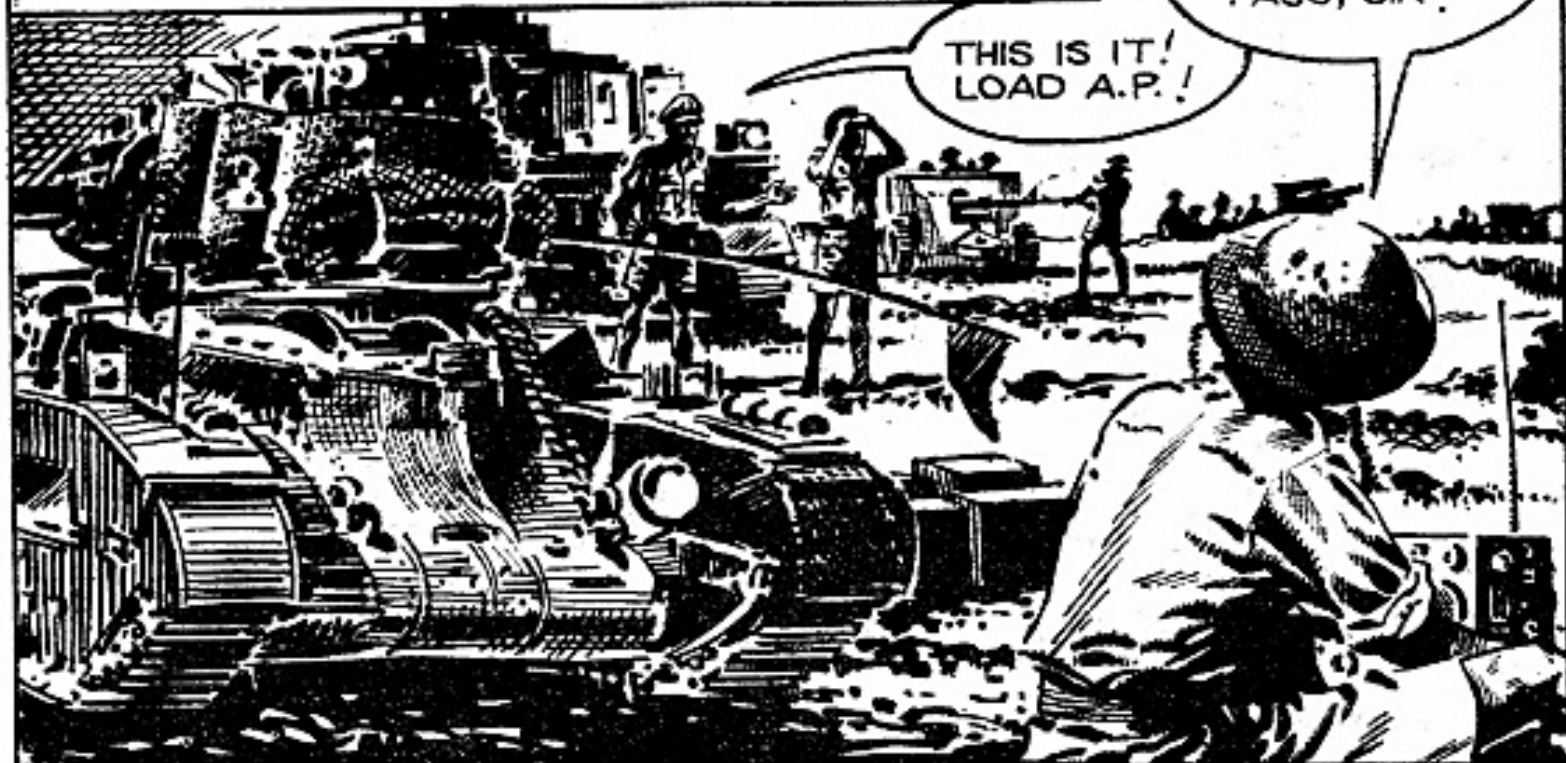
TALLYHO, TONY! I'LL THINK OF YOU WHEN I'M IN A SOFT BED IN CAIRO. I'LL LAUGH MYSELF TO SLEEP!

DON'T COUNT YOUR TANKS BEFORE YOU'VE CRACKED THE HATCHES, COOKY BOY!

AS THE MATILDA TANKS OF THE ARMoured DIVISION SWEEP ROUND IN AN ENCIRCLING MOVEMENT, THE GUNS WAITED IN AMBUSH FOR THE ENEMY ARMOUR TO SPILL THROUGH THE GAP LEFT IN THE MIDDLE.

R.A.F. REPORT ENEMY TANKS IN HELLFIRE PASS, SIR!

THIS IS IT!
LOAD A.P.!



THE ITALIAN TANK-DESIGNERS HAD BUILT THEIR CRUISER TANKS FOR SPEED. BUT SPEED MEANT LIGHT ARMOUR. THE 25-POUNDER ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELLS OPENED THEM LIKE TIN CANS.



IN THAT FIRST SUCCESSFUL ACTION, ABLE TROOP CHALKED UP EIGHT TANKS. IF THEY COULD KEEP IT UP, THE BET WAS IN THE BAG!

COME ON, BUSBY! WE'LL GRAB SOMETHING FROM THE WRECKS -- ANYTHING WITH THE TANK NUMBER ON IT.



IT WAS TONY GIBBS' FIRST GOOD LOOK AT THE DESTRUCTION HIS GUNS HAD WROUGHT.

STONE ME! THEY'RE BREWED UP GOOD AN' PROPER, SIR!

THEY DIDN'T STAND AN' EARTHLY!



AT THE NEXT BATTERED WRECK, HE FOUND ONE OF THE CREW STILL LIVING, MOANING FOR HELP.

HELP ME!
HELP ME!

ALL RIGHT,
OLD CHAP --
TAKE IT EASY!
WE'LL GET YOU
OUT OF IT!

HE CALLED UP THE STRETCHER-FITTED TRUCK FROM THE WAGON LINES AND AS THE ITALIAN WAS CARRIED AWAY HE GABBLED HIS GRATITUDE.

THANK YOU,
THANK YOU!

OKAY, OKAY! TAKE HIM
AWAY. TREAT HIM GENTLY,
POOR DEVIL -- HE WON'T BE
TROUBLING US AGAIN!

SOMEHOW, THE SWEET TASTE OF TRIUMPH WAS ALREADY TURNING SOUR IN TONY'S MOUTH. BUT IT STILL TASTED GOOD TO THE EBULLIENT COOKY...

WHAT'S THE SCORE, TONY? HOW'S THIS FOR A START? SEVEN OF 'EM KNOCKED OUT.

THE WHOLE IDEA OF WAGERING ON DEATH AND DESTRUCTION BEGAN TO CURDLE IN TONY'S STOMACH.

WE GOT EIGHT, COOKY. BUT, LOOK--LET'S CALL THE WHOLE THING OFF. I DON'T THINK I LIKE BETTING ON THIS SORT OF THING.

CALL IT OFF WITH YOU IN THE LEAD? NO FEAR! YOU CAN'T BACK OUT NOW!

THEY WERE TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT CHARACTERS -- BUT EACH WITH A GREAT LIKING FOR THE OTHER. YET NOW TONY FELT IRRITATED AT HIS FRIEND'S APPARENT CALLOUSNESS.

I JUST SAID CANCEL THE BET. YOU CAN HAVE THE FIRST CAIRO LEAVE IF IT'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY -- BUT I'M NOT BETTING ON HUMAN LIVES. OKAY?

COOKY JERKED IN SURPRISE AT THE OTHER'S CURT TONE.

HOLD YOUR HORSES, TONY!
'COURSE WE'LL CALL IT OFF IF
THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL -- BUT
DON'T SHED TEARS FOR THE
EYTIES! YOU KNOW HOW THEY
GOT KILLED? TRYING LIKE THE
DEVIL TO KILL US!



FROM THEN ON, THE IMPERIAL ARMY ADVANCED STEADILY. ALL THE MIGHT OF AN ARMoured BRIGADE IN BATTLE ROLLED AND LURCHED ACROSS THE UNEVEN SAND -- TANKS, GUNS, TRUCKS, AMBULANCES, A VAST ARMADA OF THE DESERT.



SOON THE WEATHER CHANGED, STARTING WITH A SANDSTORM DURING THE ATTACK ON SIDI BARRANI.

CEASE FIRE!
GET THE MUZZLE
COVER ON!
TARPAULIN THE
AMMO!



HIGH WINDS LASHED THE SAND INTO BITING SAVAGERY -- TO BE FOLLOWED BY TORRENTIAL DOWNPOURS OF RAIN. BATTLE IN THE SUN HAD BEEN HIGH ADVENTURE -- BUT UNDER THESE CONDITIONS THE GILT WAS DRIPPING FROM THE GINGERBREAD.

COR! WHO
SAID IT NEVER
RAINED IN THE
DESERT!

QUIT SQUAWKING,
BUSBY -- AND DRIVE
ON! WE'VE GOT AN
R.V. TO KEEP.



TONY GIBBS' RENDEZVOUS WAS WITH A SQUADRON OF MATILDAS.

STOP THE JEEP, BUSBY. THE MATILDAS ARE LEADING THE ATTACK INTO SIDI BARRANI. WE'VE GOT TO HANDLE ANY JERRY MARK TWOS THAT SLIP OUT AND TRY TO GET BEHIND THEM.



THE MARK II PANZERS WERE THERE -- BUT THEY CHOSE TO FACE THE MATILDAS HEAD ON -- WITH DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES!

NEW TARGET AT TWO O'CLOCK. FIRE WHEN READY!

COO! YOU GOTTA ADMIT THEY'VE GOT GUTS! THEY'RE TAKING A HECK OF A PASTING!



THROUGH THE MIST OF THE RAIN, THE REASON FOR THE ITALIANS' FANATICAL DEFENCE COULD BE SEEN.

LORRIED INFANTRY PARKED BEHIND ENEMY TANK SCREEN. DO WE CLOBBER THEM, TOO? OVER.

CALLING RED NINER! NOT UNLESS THEY SHOW FIGHT. THEY WILL PROBABLY SURRENDER.

THE ITALIAN COLONEL PETROZIE IN THE LAST SURVIVING ENEMY TANK FINALLY HUNG OUT A WHITE FLAG.

WE CAN FIGHT NO LONGER! WE ARE OVERWHELMED BY SUPERIOR ODDS...

CUT THE CROSS-TALK! WHAT THE HECK AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU? CAN YOU FIND YOUR OWN WAY BACK TO OUR INFANTRY?

PETROZIE RAISED HIS EYEBROWS. HE HAD HOPED FOR SOME CEREMONY--A FORMAL HANDING IN OF HIS ARMS, SOME RESPECT TO HIS RANK. BUT TO BE SHUNTED BACK WITHOUT EVEN A GUARD!

IF THAT IS YOUR ORDER...

THAT'S MY ORDER! I'LL WIRELESS BACK SO THAT THEY'LL EXPECT YOU.



BACK WENT THE MESSAGE TO BRIGADE H.Q. AND FROM THEM OUT ON TO THE BRIGADE NET. IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT ABLE TROOP'S SIGNALLER WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH HIS WIRELESS.

AFRAID IT'S NO GOOD, SIR! WATER'S GOT IN IT. I'LL HAVE TO STRIP THE SET AND DRY IT OUT.

DO THAT AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT. WE'RE OUT ON A LIMB WITHOUT COMMUNICATIONS.



IT WAS TO BE TRAGICALLY UNFORTUNATE FOR COLONEL PETROZIE AND THE SURRENDERING ITALIAN INFANTRY. THE M.II CAME DIMLY OUT OF THE MIST, FLYING A WHITE FLAG THAT HUNG DIMLY IN THE RAIN.



THE OPENING ROUNDS WERE DEAD ON TARGET. THE TANK WAS HIT FIRST AND FOLLOWING ROUNDS RANGED ON THE TRUCKS.



EVEN AS THE GUNSMOKE CLEARED, THE RAIN STOPPED AND THE SUN BROKE THROUGH THE CLOUDS, TONY GIBBS STARED AT THEIR TARGET IN HORROR...



THIS TIME, GIBBS WENT FORWARD WITH DESPAIR IN HIS HEART. ALREADY HE COULD SEE THE TROOP HAD BLUNDERED, SLAUGHTERING MEN COMING IN UNDER A FLAG OF SURRENDER.



THE BRITISH GUNNERS WERE SOON REMORSEFULLY TENDING THE WOUNDED ITALIANS WHO HAD SUFFERED FROM THAT TRAGIC TRICK OF FATE.



BUT THE PHILOSOPHY OF COLONEL PETROZIE COULD NOT WIPE AWAY TONY GIBBS' BURDEN OF GUILT.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WARNED. I OUGHT TO HAVE SEEN YOUR FLAG! DARN IT! WHAT A FILTHY WAR!



MEANWHILE, THE R.A.F., DETAILED TO ASSIST IN THE SIDI BARRANI ATTACK HAD SCRAMBLED AS THE WEATHER CLEARED. THEY, TOO, WERE NOT SURE OF THE GROUND SITUATION.

ENEMY ACTIVITY BELOW! I AM GOING IN AT LOW LEVEL!



BRITISH AND ITALIAN ALIKE THREW THEMSELVES TO THE SAND AS THE BLENHEIMS DIVED IN, PLUMMETING THEIR BOMBLOADS ON FRIEND AND FOE INDISCRIMINATELY.



THE GUNNER CAPTAIN GOT TO HIS FEET, TREMBLING WITH ANGER AT THE UTTER FUTILITY OF IT ALL.



Chapter 2. Abandoned Gun

SIDI BARRANI WAS TAKEN -- AN ARMY OF ITALIANS CAPTURED. FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, IT SEEMED AS IF THE WAR IN THE DESERT WAS AS GOOD AS WON.

KEEP MOVING, SPORTS...
THOUGH WHERE THE HECK
WE'RE GOING TO PUT YOU
ALL, I WOULDN'T KNOW.



THE NEWS OF TONY GIBBS' AMAZING
VOW HAD REACHED COOKY.

HEY, WHAT'S
ALL THIS TWADDLE,
TONY? YOU GONE
BOMB HAPPY OR
SOMETHING?

SORRY, COOKY--IT'S
NOT EASY TO EXPLAIN.
BUT I'VE GOT AN
APPOINTMENT WITH THE
BRIGADIER NOW.



THE BRIGADIER LISTENED IN COLD SILENCE TO TONY'S REQUEST.

IF IT WAS ANYONE ELSE, GIBBS, I'D SAY YOU HAD AN ATTACK OF COLD FEET--BUT I KNOW YOU BETTER. I'LL FIX YOU UP WITH A BASE JOB FOR A WHILE ...

I'M SORRY, THAT'S NOT ENOUGH, SIR! I WANT A CLEAN BREAK.



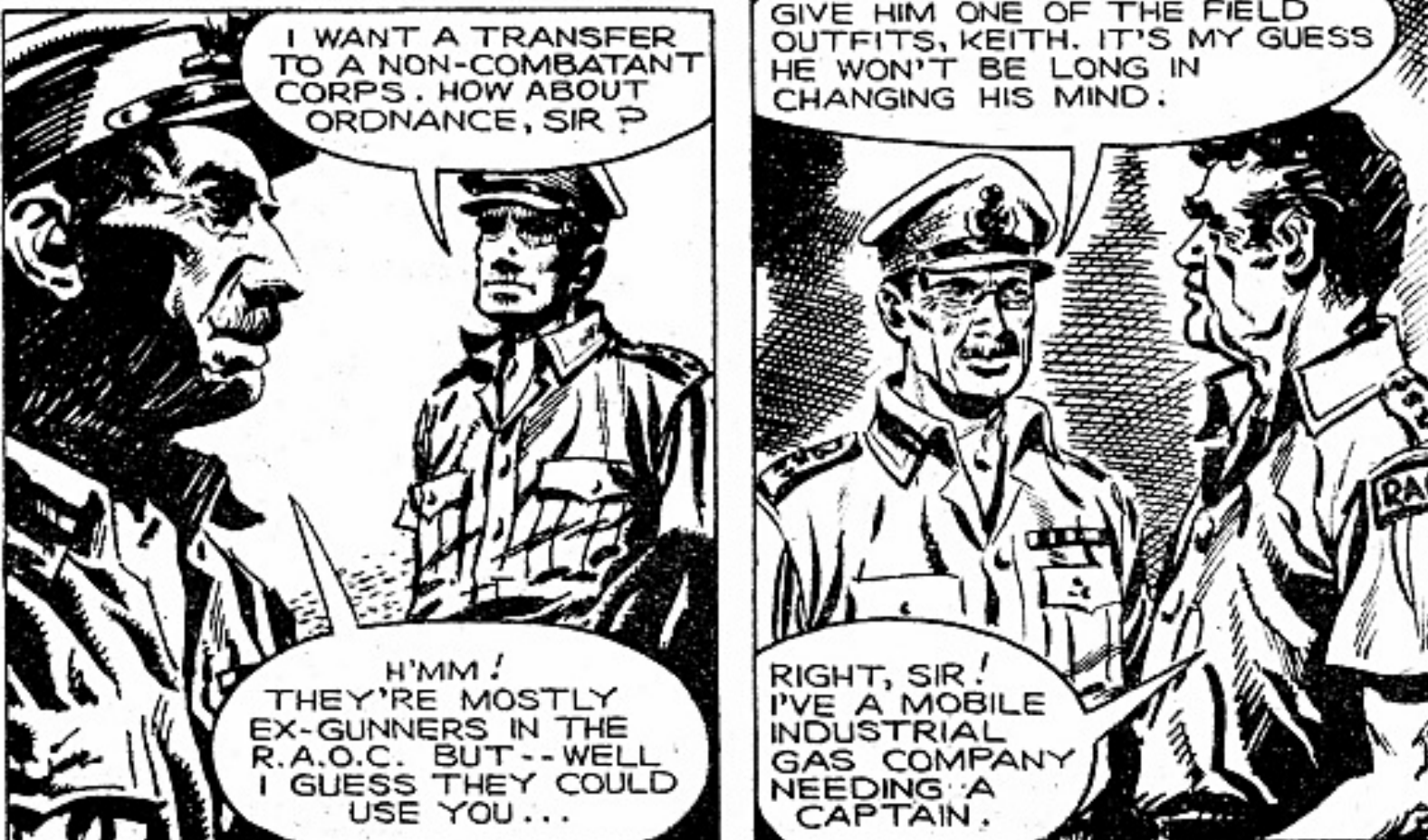
LATER, THE BRIGADIER TALKED TO HIS STAFF OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR ORDNANCE.

GIVE HIM ONE OF THE FIELD OUTFITS, KEITH. IT'S MY GUESS HE WON'T BE LONG IN CHANGING HIS MIND.

I WANT A TRANSFER TO A NON-COMBATANT CORPS. HOW ABOUT ORDNANCE, SIR?

H'MM! THEY'RE MOSTLY EX-GUNNERS IN THE R.A.O.C. BUT--WELL I GUESS THEY COULD USE YOU...

RIGHT, SIR! I'VE A MOBILE INDUSTRIAL GAS COMPANY NEEDING A CAPTAIN.



A MOBILE INDUSTRIAL GAS COMPANY!
YOU COULD NOT GET MUCH MORE
NON-COMBATANT THAN THAT! BUT
SERGEANT-MAJOR CHARLIE PELLEW
WAS PROUD OF HIS OUTFIT.

SOMEBODY'S GOT TO MAKE
THE OXY-ACETYLENE TO DISH
OUT TO THE FITTERS. THEY CAN'T
MEND TANKS WITHOUT OXY-
ACETYLENE, CAN THEY, SIR?



GENERATING SETS, RECTIFYING
SETS, COMPRESSOR SETS. ALL
HIGHLY TECHNICAL, SIR. AND
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE NOT...



NO, I KNOW
NOTHING ABOUT THE
PROCESS. BUT I CAN
COMMAND IT. I LOOK
TO YOU TO PRODUCE THE
GAS, SERGEANT-MAJOR.

THE FORMAL TRANSFER HAD STILL TO GO THROUGH, BUT TONY SWAPPED HIS GUN BADGE FOR THE ORDNANCE ONE.

GOOD BADGE, THAT, SIR. AN OLD 'UN, TOO... DATES BACK TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

I KNOW, AND I'LL TRY NOT TO DISGRACE IT, SERGEANT-MAJOR.

THEN THE WAR FLARED UP AGAIN. THE DRIVE FOR SOLLUM, BARDIA, BENGHAZI WAS ON. COOKY COOK ACTED AS IF HE HAD TO FIGHT FOR TWO TROOPS NOW.

FIRE! WIPE OUT THE SWINE!

THE ITALIANS HELD, BROKE, HELD AGAIN, ALL THE TIME LOSING LONG TORTUOUS COLUMNS OF PRISONERS TO THE COMMONWEALTH TROOPS. AFTER SOLLUM, THE ADVANCE FOR BARDIA...

SWING SOUTH! THEY'VE PUT US IN A BOX FOR PROTECTION OF THE SOFT TRUCKS! MIGHT MEET THE GAS MEN, EH?

YOU MEAN TONY GIBBS' OUTFIT? HAVEN'T HEARD MUCH OF HIM LATELY, COOKY.

IN THE THREE-SIDED BOX MADE BY THE ARMOUR, THE MAINTENANCE AND HEADQUARTERS FLEET OF TRUCKS AND TRAILERS LEAGUERED THAT NIGHT IN A WADI, WHILE THE ESCORTING ARTILLERY WAS SITED ON THE FLANKS.



MILES AWAY ACROSS THE DESERT, THE TANKS AND INFANTRY OF THE BRITISH, AUSTRALIAN, NEW ZEALAND AND INDIAN FORMATIONS WERE BATTERING AT BARDIA.

BUT FROM TOBRUK, FARTHER TO THE WEST AND STILL IN ITALIAN HANDS, CAME A RAIDING COLUMN OF TANKS MANNED BY THE ELITE BLACKSHIRT REGIMENT.

THIS TIME THEY WILL NOT TAKE BARDIA AS EASILY AS SOLLUM! WE SHALL ATTACK THEIR COMMUNICATIONS, CUT OFF THEIR AMMUNITION SUPPLY! **FORWARD!**



IT WAS A DARING, UNEXPECTED MOVE, TAKING THE ATTACKERS' WEAKEST POINT BY SURPRISE. THE BLACKSHIRTS OPENED UP AT LONG RANGE ON THE "SOFT" VEHICLES IN THE WADI LEAGUER.

SUFFERING CATS!
IT'S THE EYTIES!
GET MOVING, YOU
LAYABOUTS! WE'VE
GOT TO GET OUT
OF HERE!

DON'T PANIC,
SERGEANT-MAJOR!
THERE'S A TWENTY-
FIVE POUNDER TROOP
DEFENDING THE
LEAGUER.



THE BRUNT FELL ON COOKY'S FOUR GUNS. THEY HIT BACK AT THE ITALIAN ARMOUR OVER OPEN SIGHTS.

NUMBER THREE ---
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
WHY AREN'T YOU
FIRING?

OUT OF
AMMO, SIR! I'M
REPLENISHING
FROM THE
AMMO TRUCK!

MORE THAN ONE TRUCK HAD BEEN HIT ALREADY. THE ODDS AGAINST THE AMMO TRUCK BEING ON THE RECEIVING END OF A TANK SHELL WERE NOT HIGH. BUT WHEN IT HAPPENED, THE RESULT WAS AWESOME.



MOST OF NO.3 DETACHMENT WERE LOST. THE OTHER THREE GUNS KEPT FIRING, HOLDING OFF THE MARAUDERS WHILE THEIR AMMO LASTED, GIVING THE SOFT VEHICLES A CHANCE TO PULL OUT.



DUE TO TONY'S ADAMANT ATTITUDE, HIS VEHICLES WERE THE LAST TO MOVE -- EXCEPT FOR THE GUNS.



BUT COOKY HAD
ANOTHER DEMAND
TO MAKE...



HANG ON A MINUTE! I WANT
ONE OF YOUR TRUCKS! I CAN
ONLY TOW THREE GUNS. I'VE
LOST ONE OF THE G.T.V.'S. LEAVE
ONE OF YOUR STUPID TRAILERS
BEHIND AND HOOK THE GUN ON
INSTEAD.

SORRY! I'M NOT LEAVING ANYTHING.
THE TRAILERS ARE ON MY CHARGE.
YOU CAN LEAVE THE GUN--THERE'S
PLENTY MORE. DRIVE ON!



GIBBS! YOU'RE A
GUNNER! YOU CAN'T
REFUSE TO PULL
A GUN OUT!

I CAN--
AND DO! I'M
A GUNNER NO
LONGER!

TO COOKY THAT WAS BLASPHEMY!
YOU COULD NOT LEAVE A GUN
TO BE CAPTURED!

THERE'S
NO TIME FOR
THIS FARCE! I'LL
GET THE TRUCK
MYSELF!



YOU WON'T!
NOW GET OUT OF
MY WAY! THE
TANKS ARE
CLOSING IN.

COOKY'S RAGE BLINDED HIS REASON. HIS PILE-DRIVING RIGHT SLID PAST TONY'S EAR. GIBBS SNAPPED A TORRID LEFT INTO THE OTHER'S MIDRIF AND COMPLETED THE DESTRUCTION WITH A SOLID PUNCH TO THE JAW.



AS HE BUNDLED THE INERT BODY INTO THE JEEP, THE THREE GUNS DROVE PAST.



THE SITUATION COULD STILL HAVE BEEN DESPERATE HAD NOT A SQUADRON OF MATILDAS, HASTILY RECALLED BY WIRELESS, ARRIVED TO TAKE CARE OF THE MARAUDING ITALIAN ARMOUR.



THE FOLLOWING MORNING, IT WAS A SILENT AND BITTER MAN WHO RETURNED TO COLLECT THE ABANDONED 25-POUNDER GUN. CAPTAIN COOKY COOK FELT DISGRACED.

YOU COMING BACK FOR THAT PEA-SHOOTER? MIGHT SEND A LETTER OF THANKS TO THE ARMoured CORPS FOR IT! TRUST THE CAVALRY TO GET YOU OUT OF A MESS!

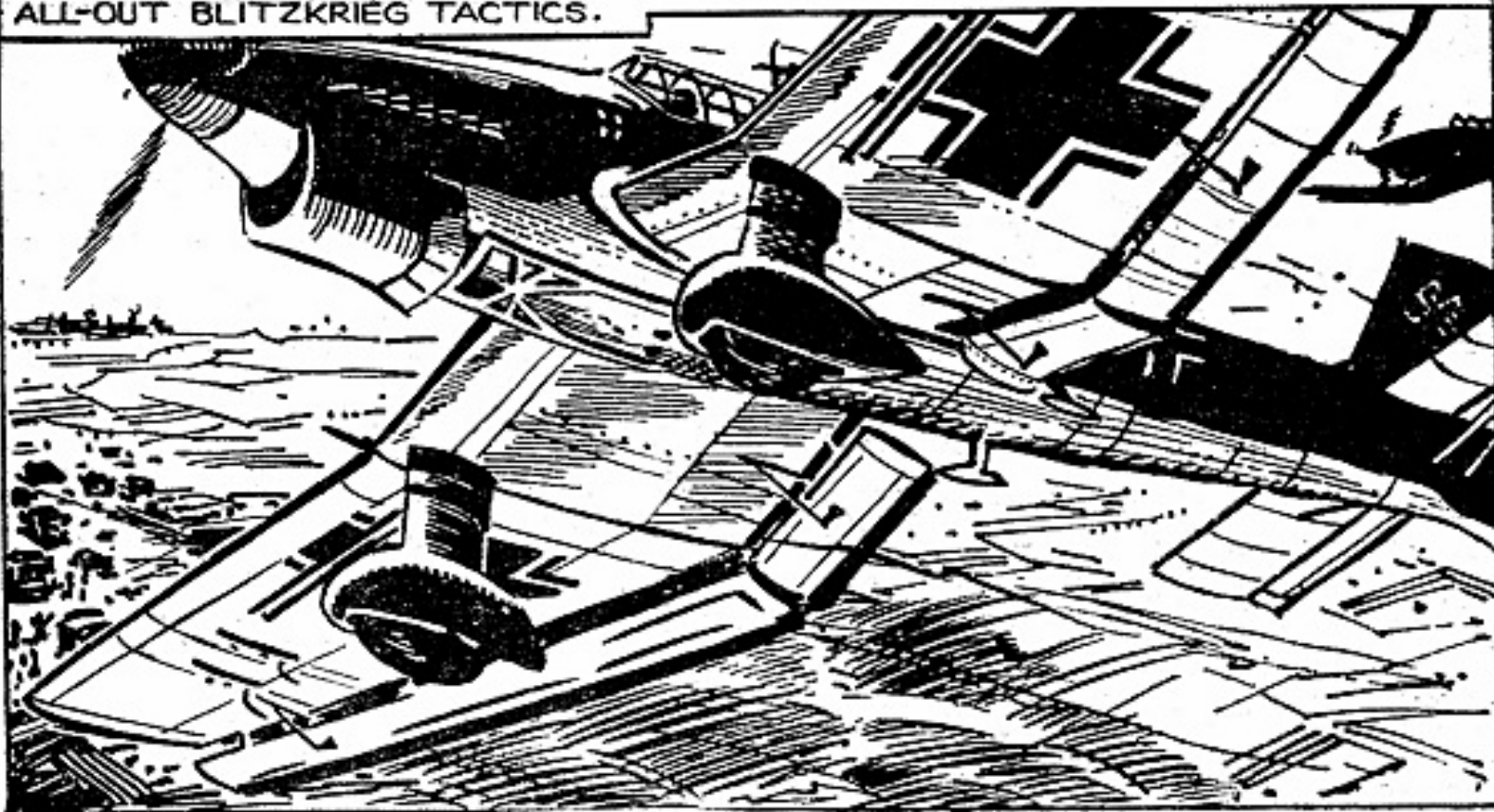


Chapter 3. *Retreat*

THE PATHS OF TONY GIBBS AND COOKY COOK DID NOT CROSS AGAIN UNTIL APRIL IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR. THE BRITISH ARMY HAD ENTERED GREECE IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO HOLD THE GERMAN INVASION. THE ARMoured BRIGADE SET UP ITS MAINTENANCE UNIT NEAR MOUNT OLYMPUS.



IT WAS TO BE A FORLORN GESTURE ON BRITAIN'S PART. THE IMPERIAL FORCES WERE FEW IN NUMBER, THE GREEK ARMY ILL-EQUIPPED. THE GERMANS WERE DRIVING DOWN FROM YUGOSLAVIA, EXPLOITING THEIR ALL-OUT BLITZKRIEG TACTICS.



BOMBED INCESSANTLY, THE BRIGADE HELD ITS GROUND UNTIL, INEVITABLY, THE ORDER CAME TO RETREAT.

SERGEANT-MAJOR,
UP STICKS AND
AWAY! WE'RE
PULLING OUT!

OH NO! JUST
WHEN I'D GOT
EVERYTHING SHIP
SHAPE AGAIN! SHUT
UP SHOP, YOU
LAYABOUTS!



THE NARROW MOUNTAIN ROADS MADE THE WITHDRAWAL DIFFICULT. THE VEHICLES OF THE BRIGADE'S TAIL BECAME THE FIRST CASUALTIES...

PASS THE WORD UP FRONT
TO THE CAPTAIN! THERE'S A
TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER BATTERY
ON OUR HEELS. THE OFFICER
WANTS TO TALK TO THE
O.C.



COOKY COOK WAVED A BRIGADE AUTHORITY IN FRONT OF TONY'S NOSE ...

THIS'LL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR GAS METERS! I'VE TOP PRIORITY TO ESTABLISH ANOTHER DEFENCE LINE NORTH OF VOLOS. GET YOUR OUTFIT OUT OF THE WAY!

HOW THE DICKENS CAN I? THERE'S NO ROOM TO PASS!



DITCH YOUR TRUCKS OVER THE SIDE! YOU WON'T GET THEM OUT OF GREECE, ANYWAY. DITCH THEM -- OR, BY HEAVENS, I'LL OPEN FIRE ON THEM!



FOR ONE EXPLOSIVE MOMENT, TONY HESITATED -- BUT COOK HAD THE BRIGADE PRIORITY.

OKAY -- I'LL DITCH MY TRUCKS. ALL EXCEPT ONE TO TAKE THE MEN OUT.

THAT'S THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE SHOWED SENSE SINCE SIDI BARRANI!



TONY HAD THE CYLINDER-STORE TRUCK PULLED IN TO THE ONLY DEPRESSION IN THE ROCK. THEN, ONE BY ONE -- THE VALUABLE EQUIPMENT WAS PUSHED OVER THE CLIFF EDGE. SERGEANT MAJOR CHARLIE PELLEW WATCHED THEM GO WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES.

I CAME OUT FROM BLIGHTY WITH THIS LOT! I COULD ALMOST JUMP OVER MYSELF.

THE GUN TROOP THUNDERED SOUTH AND TONY LOADED ALL HIS MEN IN THE CYLINDER TRUCK.

WE MIGHT AS WELL DUMP THE CYLINDERS, TOO, SIR. MAKE MORE ROOM FOR THE CHAPS.

NO. WE'LL HOLD THEM AS LONG AS WE CAN. THEY MAY BE NEEDED.

BEFORE VOLOS, THEY MADE CONTACT WITH THE MASS OF THE ARMY, CAUGHT UP IN THE BOTTLENECK OF THE PORT.



THEY TURNED ON TO A SIDE ROAD WHICH LED SOUTHWARDS INTO THE MOUNTAINS. THEN...



IN TONY'S OPINION THERE WAS NO POINT IN GOING BACK NOW.

STOP ACTING LIKE A LITTLE TIN GOD! GET OUT OF THE WAY--WE'RE GOING THROUGH!

GIBBS-- WAIT!



SOMETHING OF THE OLD COOKY BROKE THROUGH--AS IF HE STILL COULD NOT BELIEVE TONY GIBBS HAD DESERTED THE ROYAL REGIMENT THEY BOTH HAD BEEN PROUD TO SERVE IN.



TONY! WE NEED YOU BADLY HERE. THIS IS NOT LIKE FIGHTING THE EYTIES. COME AND TAKE A SECTION OF GUNS.

IT WAS TRUE THE GERMANS WERE DIFFERENT TO THE ITALIANS, BUT WAR WAS STILL A MATTER OF SENSELESS SLAUGHTER IN TONY'S BOOK.

SORRY! I'M STILL STRICTLY NON-COMBATANT.



THEN, GET LOST, FOR PETE'S SAKE! YOU MAKE ME SICK!

THE VILLAGE OF KAZONE OVERLOOKED THE AEGEAN SEA. THERE WAS NO OTHER ROAD LEADING FROM IT, TONY REALISED IN DISMAY.

IT'S A DEAD END!
NO WONDER NONE
OF THE OTHER
TRAFFIC USED
THIS WAY.

ENEMY
AIRCRAFT!
HIT THE
DITCH,
LADS!

AS TONY AND HIS ORDNANCE MEN TOOK COVER THEY SOON SAW THAT NEITHER THEY NOR THE VILLAGE WAS THE TARGET.

THEY'RE CLOBBERING
THE GUNS! THE TROOP
MUST HAVE BEEN
SPOTTED!



WHEN THE BOMBERS LEFT, THERE WAS AN UNEARTHLY SILENCE. THEY TURNED THE TRUCK AND HEADED BACK TOWARDS THE GUN POSITIONS.



GOOD GRIEF!
WHAT A
SHAMBLES!

LOOKS LIKE
CAPTAIN COOK
OVER THERE,
SIR!

COOKY HAD BEEN HIT BY SPLINTERS BUT WAS MORE SHOCKED THAN SERIOUSLY HURT. HE BABBLLED LIKE A CRAZY MAN.

TAKE IT EASY,
BOY. WE'LL FIX
YOU UP.

THE FILTHY
JERRIES! THEY'VE
SMASHED MY
TROOP... MY
TROOP!

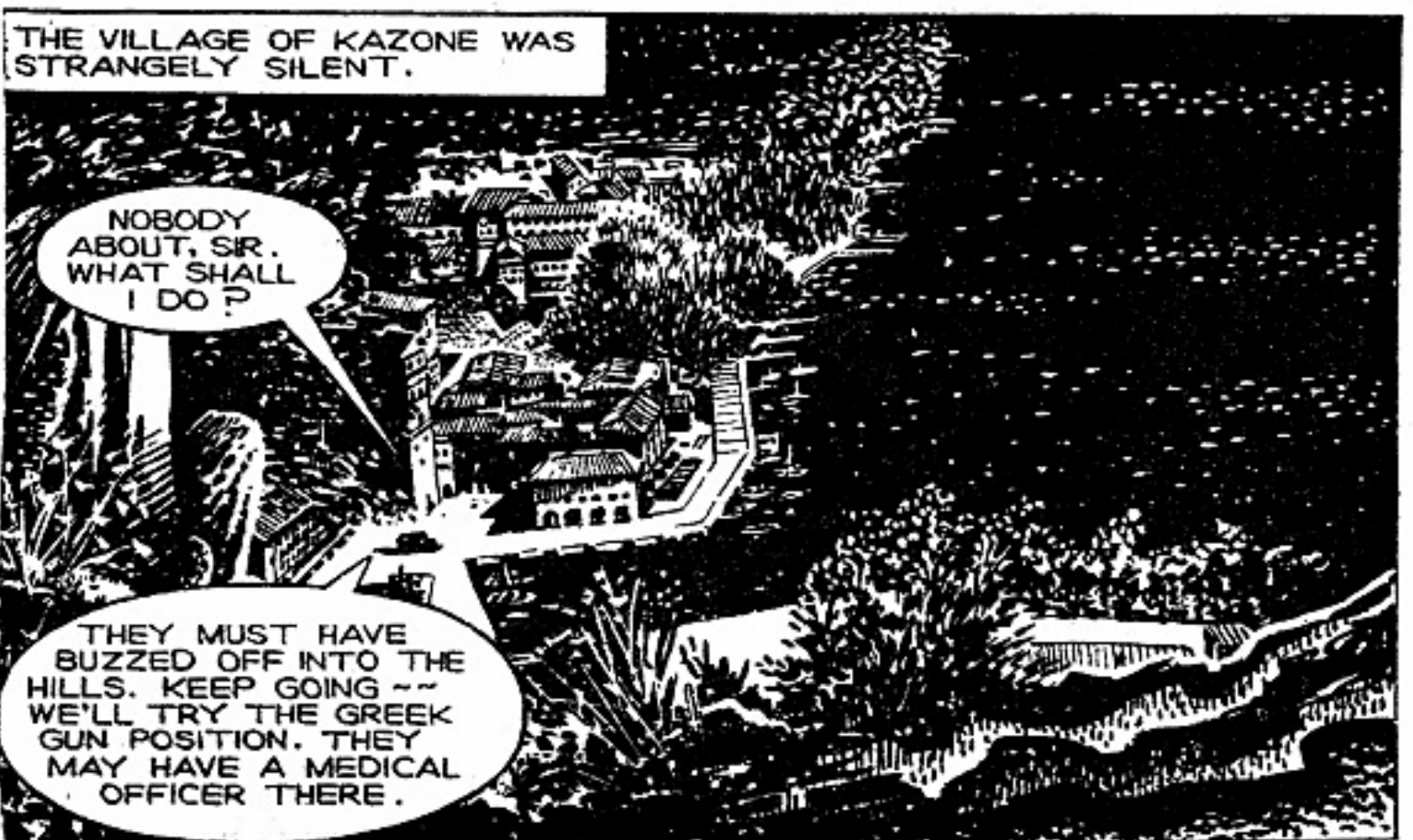


THEY LIFTED COOKY ABOARD THE TRUCK AND SET OFF BACK TO VOLOS. BUT BEFORE THEY HAD GONE FAR...



GERMANS--
AND MOVING
FAST! BACK UP
BEFORE THEY SPOT
US! BACK TO THE
VILLAGE!

THE VILLAGE OF KAZONE WAS STRANGELY SILENT.



NOBODY
ABOUT, SIR.
WHAT SHALL
I DO?

THEY MUST HAVE
BUZZED OFF INTO THE
HILLS. KEEP GOING --
WE'LL TRY THE GREEK
GUN POSITION. THEY
MAY HAVE A MEDICAL
OFFICER THERE.

THERE WAS A SMALL PARTY OF GREEK OFFICERS WAITING BESIDE THE ROAD LEADING TO THE BIG GUN POSITION.

WELL, THE GERMANS ARE ON OUR HEELS. CAN YOU HELP US?

I AM COLONEL KORIZIS. WE WERE EXPECTING GERMANS! THE GREEK ARMY HAS FORMALLY SURRENDERED.



THE GREEK COLONEL HESITATED -- THEN SHRUGGED...

IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU TO SURRENDER, TOO-- BUT YOU BRITISH NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU ARE BEATEN! I WILL FIND SHELTER FOR YOU AND YOUR LORRY FOR THE MOMENT. BUT WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS, WHO KNOWS?



KORIZIS SPOKE RAPIDLY TO THE GREEK SOLDIER, WHO MOUNTED THE STEP OF THE TRUCK AND DIRECTED THEM NORTHWARDS FOR A QUARTER OF A MILE.

IN HERE. THE COLONEL SAYS YOU GO IN HERE.

IT'S ONE OF THE MAGAZINES FOR THE GUN POSITION. GOOD AS ANYWHERE IN AN EMERGENCY, I GUESS.



WHAT HAD BEEN A NATURAL CAVE HAD BEEN ENLARGED AND CONVERTED INTO A STORAGE PLACE FOR SHELLS AND CORDITE CHARGES.

GET THE TRUCK HIDDEN BEHIND THAT STACK OF SHELLS. WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE IT AND THINK OF GETTING AWAY BY SEA IF POSSIBLE. BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST—WE MUST HAVE A DOCTOR FOR CAPTAIN COOK.



OUTSIDE, THE GERMANS HAD ALREADY ARRIVED TO TAKE OVER THE KAZONE GUN POSITION.

QUICK OFF THE MARK, WEREN'T THEY, SIR?

IT'S A VITAL DEFENCE POINT. IT COVERS THE PORT OF VOLOS! I ONLY HOPE THE GREEKS SPIKED THE GUNS BEFORE HANDING THEM OVER!



IT WAS SOME TIME LATER, WHEN COLONEL KORIZIS JOINED THE HIDDEN BRITISH, BRINGING THE GREEK MEDICAL OFFICER WITH HIM.

WE MUST BE QUICK! I TELL THEM WE HAVE SICK MEN IN BARRACKS. WHERE IS YOUR WOUNDED COMRADE?

IN THE TRUCK. I DON'T THINK HE IS BADLY HURT.



COOKY HAD ALREADY RECOVERED FROM THE SHOCK...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DOC. JUST BANDAGE THIS CUT ON THE ARM AND I'LL BE FIT TO FIGHT AGAIN.

THERE WILL BE NO MORE FIGHTING! WE HAVE SURRENDERED AND YOUR ARMY IS EVACUATING FROM EVERY POSSIBLE PORT. GREECE IS FINISHED!



TONY ASKED THE QUESTION WHICH HAD BEEN WORRYING HIM.

YOUR GUNS? YOU PUT THEM OUT OF ACTION, DIDN'T YOU?

I - I WANTED TO, BUT THE SURRENDER TERMS WERE EXPLICIT. THE GERMANS HAVE ALREADY SENT TRAINED HEAVY GUN CREWS TO TAKE OVER.

THERE WAS A SUDDEN ANGRY GROWL FROM COOKY...

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS? THEY'LL SHELL THE SHIPS TRYING TO GET OUR BLOKES OUT OF VOLOS!

I AM SORRY! BUT I HAD TO OBEY ORDERS!



Chapter 4. *Return to Action*

DESPITE THE RISK HE WAS TAKING, THE GREEK COLONEL SUPPLIED THEM WITH FOOD. COOKY, HOWEVER, WAS STILL SAVAGE IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF THEIR SURRENDER TERMS.



THEY SPENT AN UNEASY NIGHT, TO BE WAKENED AT DAWN BY THE CRASHING EXPLOSION OF THE NEARBY GUN BATTERY.



THE PORT OF VOLOS WAS CROWDED WITH THE BRITISH EVACUATION FLEET. THE GUN POSITION AT KAZONE HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO GUARD THE ENTRANCE TO THE PORT. NOW IT WAS GUARDING THE EXITS!



THE MORNING SUN WAS RISING ON HIGH DRAMA IN VOLOS. IT WAS REFLECTED ON A SMALLER SCALE OUTSIDE THE MAGAZINE AT KAZONE.



AGAIN! THEY'RE HAMMERING THE PORT GOOD AND PROPER. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT? STAND AND WATCH!

WE--YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING, COOKY!

LOOK! WE'VE GOT A WHOLE CAVERN FULL OF HIGH EXPLOSIVES! I'M GOING TO HAVE A CRACK AT THOSE GUNS OR BUST! WHO'S WITH ME ON THIS? ARE YOU, GIBBS?

TONY TRIED TO REASON WITH THE ARTILLERY CAPTAIN...

LISTEN, COOKY! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE TO EXPLODE SHELLS AS IF THEY WERE CHARGES.

WHY NOT? SET THE FUSE AT ZERO AND SEND THEM INTO THE GUN POSITION ON THIS TROLLEY!

THE SCHEME SOUNDED FEASIBLE ENOUGH TO SWING SOME OF THE ORDNANCE MEN ON TO HIS SIDE.

COUNT ME IN, TOO, SIR.

COOKY! REMEMBER YOUR GUNNERY, MAN! THE FUSE WON'T WORK UNTIL IT'S BEEN ARMED. IT'S THE KICK OF THE CHARGE AND THE ROTATION GIVEN BY THE BARREL RIFLING THAT DOES THAT!

I'M WITH YOU, SIR! I'M NO FIGHTING MAN BUT I'D LIKE A BASH AT THE JERRIES.

BUT COOKY WAS PAST LISTENING TO REASON. HE WAS FIGHTING MAD. WITH A FUSE KEY TAKEN FROM THE MAGAZINE, HE WORKED ON THE FUSES OF THE TWO SHELLS ON THE TROLLY.

TWO - ONE POINT FIVE - ONE! THESE SHOULD EXPLODE IN EXACTLY ONE MINUTE! COME ON... LET'S GO!

YOU FOOL!
YOU'LL BE KILLED FOR CERTAIN!



COOKY ROUNDED FURIOUSLY ON THE "NON-COMBATANT"...

GET FROM UNDER MY FEET, GIBBS! YOU AND I DON'T TALK THE SAME LANGUAGE ANY MORE!



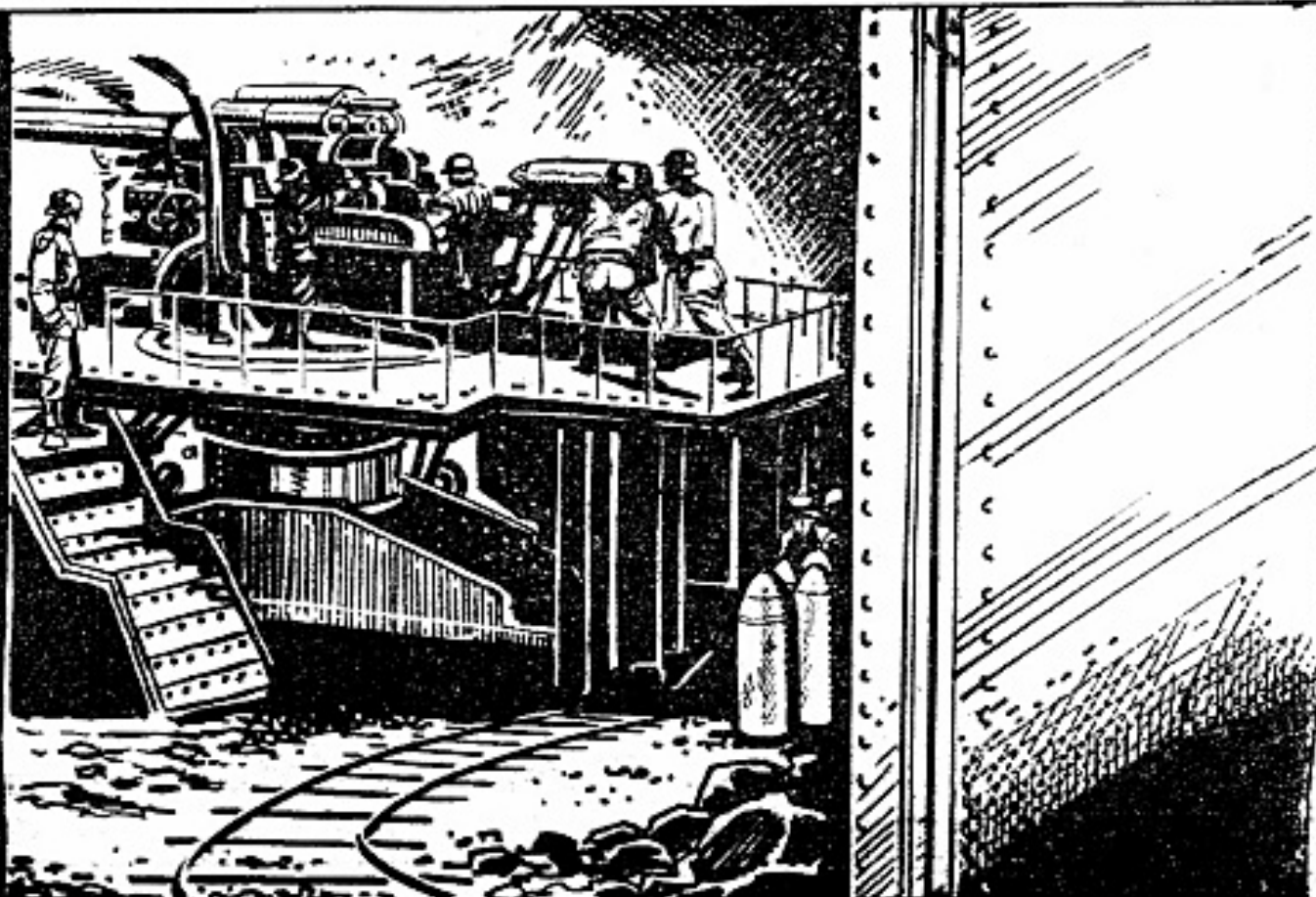
THE FUSE SECONDS WERE SLIPPING AWAY...

QUICK, LADS!
WE RUN THE TROLLY RIGHT UP TO THE GUNS. THEY MAY SEE US-- BUT IT'S A RISK WE'VE GOT TO TAKE!

WE'RE WITH YOU, SIR!



THE RAILS RAN RIGHT DOWN TO THE BASE OF THE MASSIVE GUN MOUNTINGS. IMMERSED IN THE LOADING AND FIRING OF THE GUNS, THE GERMANS DID NOT NOTICE THE TROLLEY AS IT SPED TOWARDS THEM ...



...UNTIL IT WAS WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF THE GUN ITSELF. THEN IT WAS TOO LATE...



HIMMEL!
ACHTUNG!
ACHTUNG!

ACCURSED
ENGLANDERS!

FOR A SECOND, TIME STOOD STILL. COOKY AND HIS VOLUNTEERS WERE ROOTED TO THE GROUND, AS IF MESMERISED WHILE WAITING FOR THE EXPLOSION.

YOU AND YOU!
SCHNELL! TAKE
THOSE MEN!

BUT NO EXPLOSION CAME!

THE TROLLEY CRASHED INTO THE BASE OF THE GUN MOUNTING AND THAT WAS ALL. ALREADY GERMAN SOLDIERS HAD CLOSED IN UPON COOKY AND HIS MEN.

ENGLANDERS! STRAYS FROM
THE PACK AT VOLOS, EH?
TRYING FANCY TRICKS WITH THE
AMMUNITION! TAKE THEM TO
MAJOR SCHARNLOZ!

THEY HAD SEEN THE TRAGEDY BACK IN THE MAGAZINE, AND THE SERGEANT MAJOR WAS WORRIED.

THAT WAS A FOOL THING TO DO, SIR! NOW THEY'LL SEARCH AND FIND US, TOO!

FOOL THING, MAYBE -- BUT IT TOOK COURAGE, PELLEW! QUICKLY, WE MUST COVER THE TRUCK WELL AND KEEP QUIET. THEY CAN STILL MISS US.



THE TRUCK STOOD IN A SHADOWY CORNER OF THE CAVERN, AND TONY AND THE REST OF THE PARTY HID IN IT. THEY HEARD THE TROLLEY BEING PUSHED IN, AND THE VOICE OF A GERMAN SPEAKING GUTTURAL ENGLISH ...

YOU HAVE A WEAKNESS FOR PUSHING AMMUNITION AROUND, ENGLANDERS. IT IS GOOD. I AM SHORT OF MEN -- AND NEED AMMUNITION. YOU WILL LOAD THE SHELLS ON TO THE TROLLEY -- THEN YOU WILL PUSH THEM TO THE GUNS!

FOR YOU TO FIRE THEM AT OUR SHIPS! I WON'T TOUCH A ROUND!



INSIDE THE CAB OF THE TRUCK, TONY'S FINGERNAILS CUT INTO HIS PALMS AS HE WATCHED THE GERMAN SMASH HIS HAND ACROSS COOKY'S FACE.

THAT IS INSOLENT!
YOU WILL OBEY ME,
SCHWEINHUND!



STILL COOKY REFUSED. THE GERMAN SNATCHED THE LUGER FROM HIS BELT...

I HAVE NO TIME TO
WASTE ON YOU. GET
TO WORK ON THOSE
SHELLS... **OR YOU
DIE!**



IN THE GLOOM OF THE HIDDEN TRUCK, CAPTAIN TONY GIBBS WAS COMING TO TERMS WITH HIMSELF. THE PITY HE HAD FELT FOR THE ITALIANS HAD LONG SINCE OOOZED AWAY UNDER THE PRESSURE OF THE GERMAN BLITZ. THE MENACE OF THIS BRUTAL ENEMY COMPLETED THE TRANSFORMATION.

IF I DO NOTHING
NOW ~~ I WILL
NEVER BE ABLE
TO LIVE WITH
MYSELF AGAIN!



STRANGELY, DESPITE THE DANGER, HE FELT EXCITED, ALMOST HAPPY FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR MONTHS. HE SLIPPED SILENTLY OUT OF THE CAB TOWARDS THE NEAREST GERMAN ...



IN ONE VIOLENT MOVEMENT, HE HAD FELLED THE GERMAN, GRABBED HIS CARBINE AND FIRED.



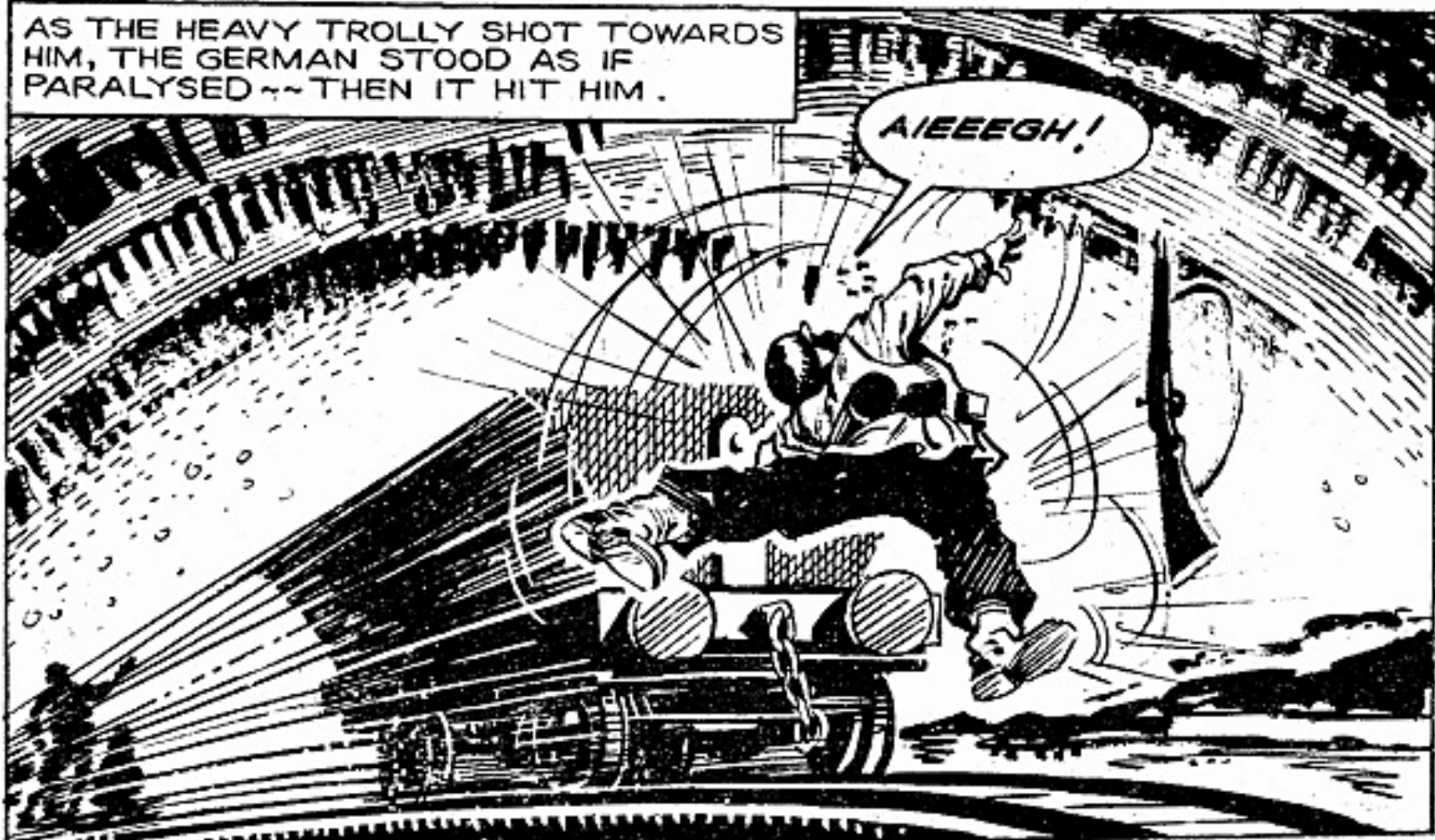
TWO MORE SNAP SHOTS CUT DOWN TWO MORE GERMANS. THE FOURTH MAN SCURRIED TO THE END OF THE MAGAZINE ...



BUT IT WAS COOKY, COMING TO LIFE AGAIN, WHO SAW THE QUICKEST METHOD OF DEALING WITH THE LAST GERMAN. HE GAVE THE TROLLEY A HEFTY PUSH...



AS THE HEAVY TROLLEY SHOT TOWARDS HIM, THE GERMAN STOOD AS IF PARALYSED—~ THEN IT HIT HIM.



IT WAS COMPLETE VICTORY. A SMALL ONE --A TEMPORARY ONE-- BUT YET A VICTORY! THERE WAS AN AIR OF EXHILARATION IN THE MAGAZINE.

TONY! BY GOLLY! I KNEW YOU'D SEE THE LIGHT AGAIN! WE'VE GOT SOME WEAPONS; NOW! LET'S GO GET THE REST OF THE JERRIES AND SPIKE THE GUNS.

COOKY! YOU'RE CRAZY! WE'VE GOT FOUR CARBINES AND A LUGER--AND WE START A WAR! STILL, WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

THERE WAS EAGER COMPETITION FOR THE FEW WEAPONS. ONLY SERGEANT-MAJOR CHARLIE PELLEW SEEMED RELUCTANT.

HERE, SERGEANT MAJOR! TAKE THIS CARBINE --

NOT ME, SIR! I'M NO HAND WITH THEM THINGS. THE ONLY EXPLOSIVE THINGS I'M A DAB HAND AT ARE GAS CYLINDERS!



THE PLAN WAS FOR A DIRECT ASSAULT ON THE GUN POSITION. BUT SURPRISE WAS LOST WHEN AN ALERT SENTRY SIGHTED THE LITTLE GROUP AS THEY APPROACHED ...

ACH!
ENGLANDERS!
SOUND THE
ALARM!
CLOSE THE
GATE!



THEY TOOK THE BULL BY THE HORNS AND CHARGED. BUT THE IRON DOOR SLAMMED INTO PLACE EVEN AS THEY REACHED THE GATE!

DARN IT! WHAT
THE HECK DO
WE DO NOW?

WE BLAST IT!
REMEMBER WHAT
CHARLIE PELLEW
SAID ABOUT THE
GAS CYLINDERS?
THEY'RE EXPLOSIVE!
WE'RE ARTILLERYMEN,
AREN'T WE?



BACK IN THE MAGAZINE, TONY HURLED QUESTIONS AT CHARLIE ...

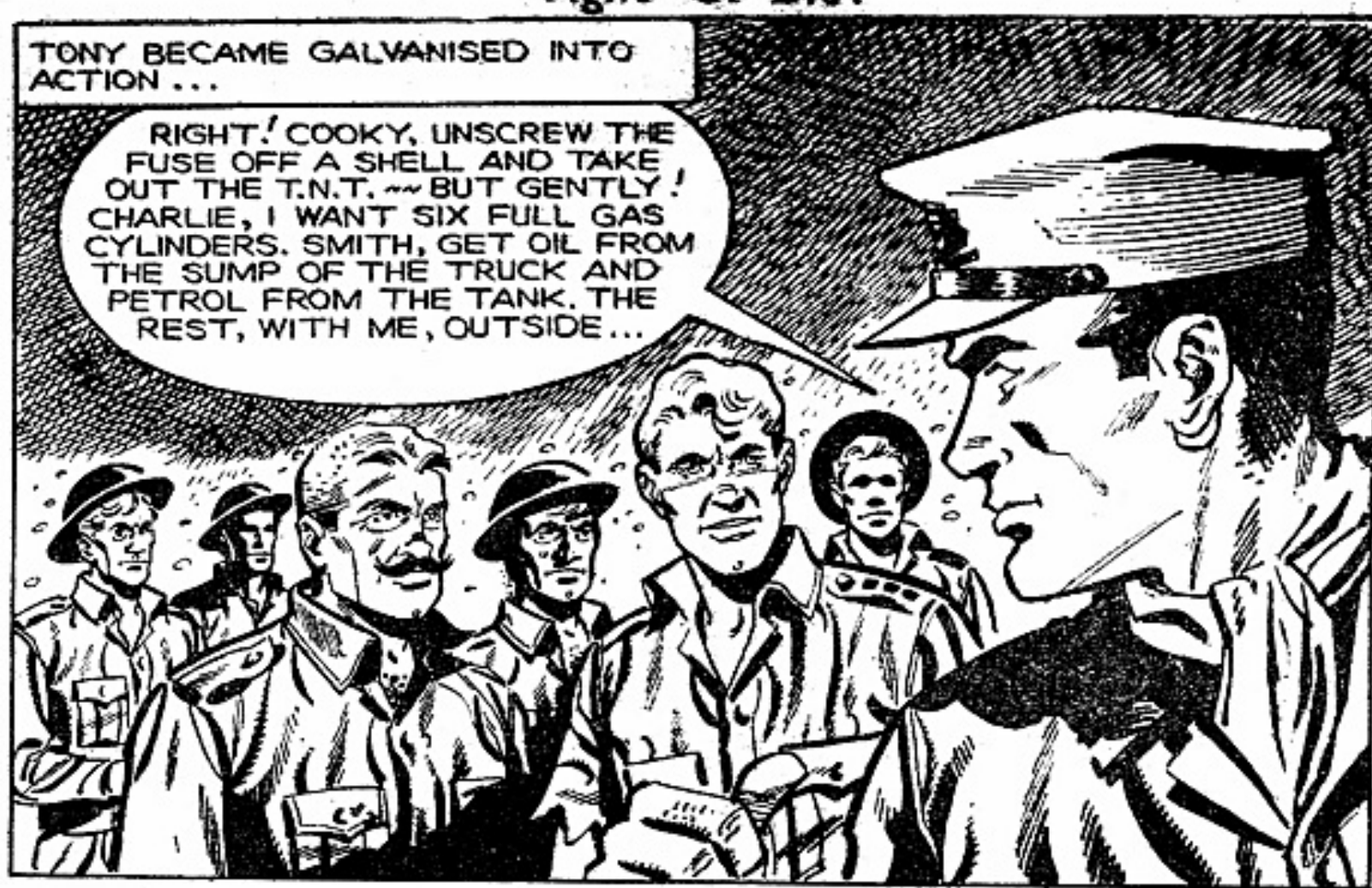
ALL I KNOW ABOUT
THE GAS ARE THE SAFETY
RULES. IF THE GAS TOUCHES
OIL IT CATCHES FIRE.
DOESN'T IT?



IT DOES THAT!
THE WHOLE CYLINDER
EXPLODES! KEEP OIL
AWAY FROM THE
CYLINDERS--SAFETY RULE
NUMBER ONE, THAT IS!

TONY BECAME GALVANISED INTO ACTION ...

RIGHT! COOKY, UNSCREW THE FUSE OFF A SHELL AND TAKE OUT THE T.N.T. ... BUT GENTLY! CHARLIE, I WANT SIX FULL GAS CYLINDERS. SMITH, GET OIL FROM THE SUMP OF THE TRUCK AND PETROL FROM THE TANK. THE REST, WITH ME, OUTSIDE ...



OUTSIDE, TWO HOLES WERE DUG IN THE GROUND WHILE THE MEN COLLECTED TWO LARGE DRAIN PIPES FROM THE STACK NEAR THE MAGAZINE.

UP-END THEM IN THE HOLES. I THINK I'VE GOT THE ANGLE RIGHT. BUT I WANT TO SEE IF THEY FIT.

LIKE BLOOMIN' BIG MORTAR BARRELS, AREN'T THEY, SIR?



THEN TONY PUT SOME POWDERED T.N.T. IN THE PIPES AND POURED PETROL INTO THE HOLES.

NOW, HERE'S THE DRILL! WE SOAK THE NECK OF THE CYLINDERS IN OIL, OPEN THE VALVES AND LET THE GAS ESCAPE. THAT CATCHES FIRE AND, IF WE'RE LUCKY, BY THE TIME THE CYLINDER GETS THERE, IT'S REACHED EXPLOSION POINT!

GETS THERE?
HOW?

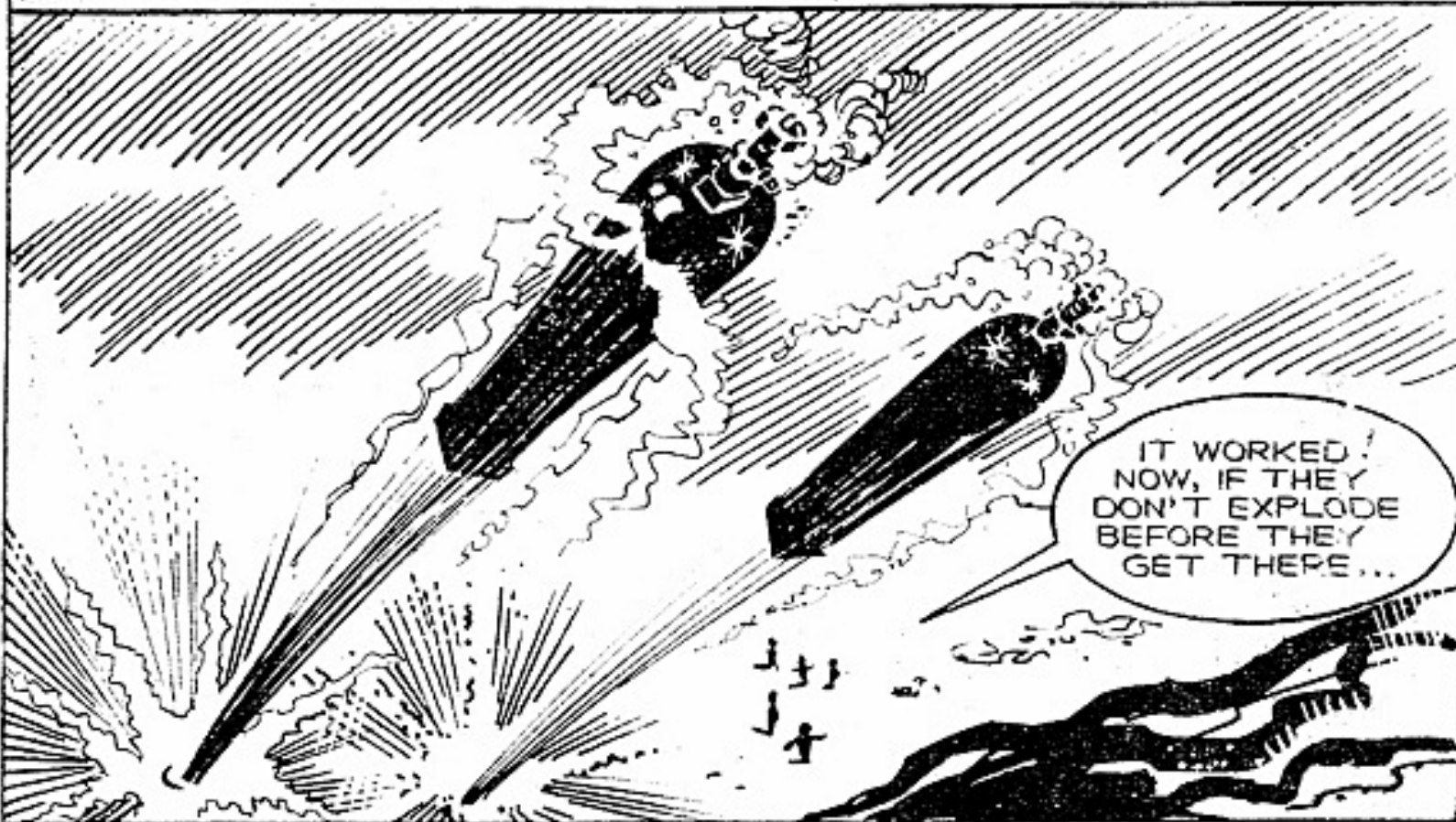
I GET IT!
YOU'RE GOING
TO USE THEM
AS MORTARS!

IT WAS CRUDE GUNNERY,
BUT IT MIGHT WORK!

RIGHT! OPEN THE VALVES! COOKY,
GET READY TO LIGHT THE PETROL IN
THE HOLES. THAT WILL HAVE SEEPED
THROUGH ON TO THE T.N.T. IT WILL
GIVE US THE FIRING CHARGE.

WE'LL GET RESULTS
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER!
IT'LL KILL THEM ...
OR US!

AS COOKY TOUCHED OFF THE PETROL, THE FLAMES SHOT DOWN INTO THE HOLES, IGNITING THE T.N.T. THE EXPLOSION ROCKETED THE CYLINDERS THROUGH THE AIR, LIKE FANTASTIC MORTAR BOMBS...



THE 5 FT. CYLINDERS WEIGHED 200 LBS. AND WERE FILLED WITH GAS AT 1,980 LBS. PER SQUARE INCH. THEY WERE DYNAMITE! THEY SMASHED OUT OF THE SKY DOWN ON TO THE GUN BATTERY...



THE NEXT CYLINDERS WERE AIMED AT THE GATE. THIS TIME THE VERY WEIGHT AND VELOCITY OF THE MISSILES SMASHED THE GATE ASIDE...

UP THE GUNNERS!

AND THE ORDNANCE, SIR!

THE GERMAN COAST DEFENCE GUNNERS LACKED THE FIGHTING CALIBRE OF PARATROOPERS OR FRONT-LINE INFANTRY. EVEN CHARLIE PELLEW COULD DEAL WITH THEM, USING AN IRON BAR...

OH, NO YOU DON'T, FRITZ!



THEIR FINAL ACT WAS TO RAM GAS CYLINDERS INTO THE BREECHES OF THE GUNS.

THAT PUTS PAID TO THEM!
NOW WE'LL SET FIRE TO THE
TRUCK IN THE MAGAZINE AND
SEE WHAT HAPPENS.



DO WE HAVE TO
WAIT AND SEE, SIR?
MAYBE WE COULD
FIND A BOAT...

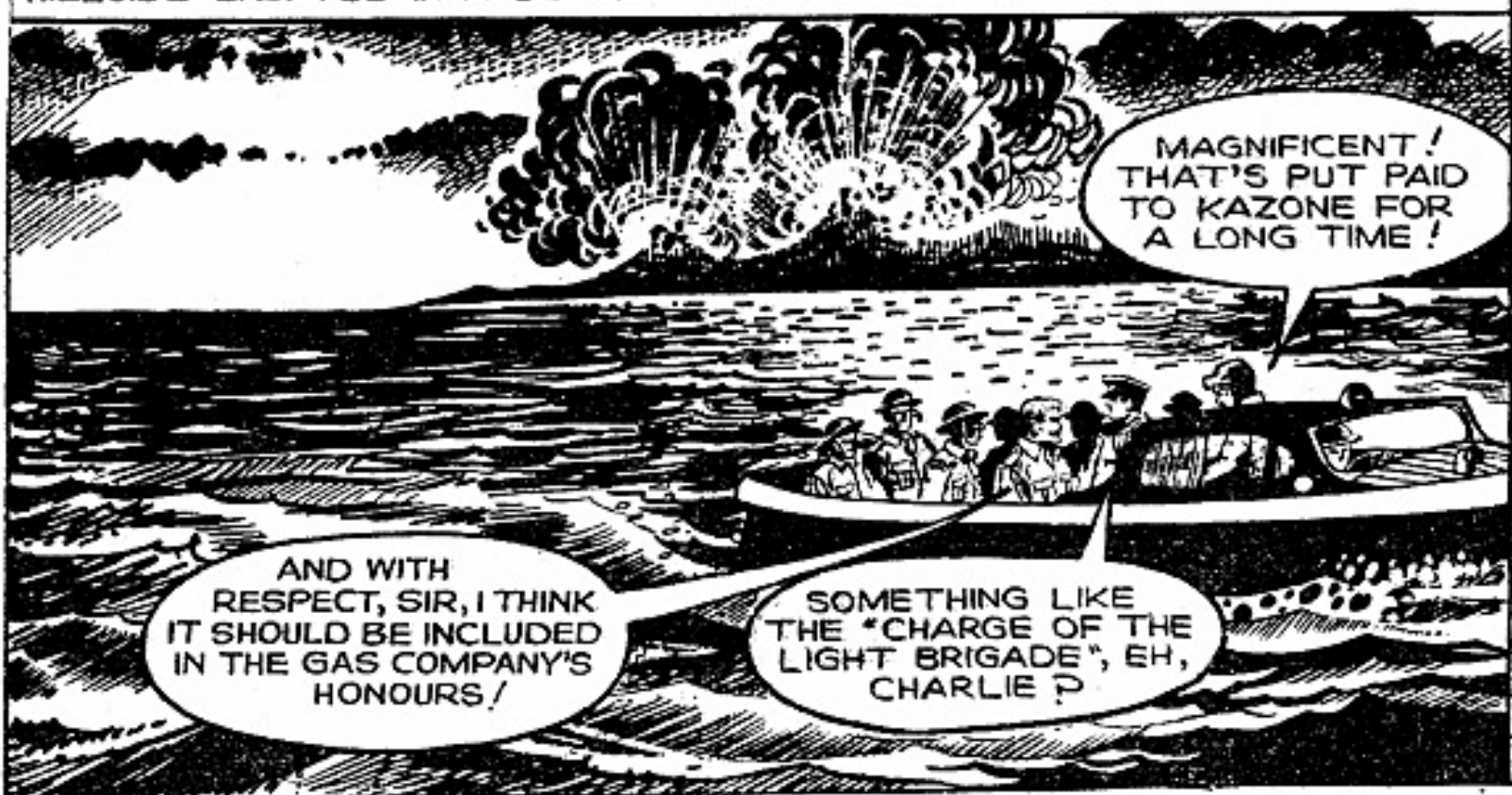
WHILE THE TRUCK WAS BEING
SET ALIGHT, THE OTHERS
SOUGHT OUT A BOAT IN A
NEARBY VILLAGE.

WHEN THE CYLINDERS GO
UP, THEY SHOULD TOUCH
OFF A CHAIN REACTION
AMONG ALL THE
AMMO IN HERE.



I DON'T KNOW
ABOUT THAT, SIR...
BUT IT OUGHT TO MAKE
A BLOOMING BIG BANG!

COOKY, TONY GIBBS AND THE MOBILE INDUSTRIAL GAS COMPANY WERE
MOVING ACROSS THE BAY TO THE PORT OF VOLOS WHEN THE WHOLE
HILLSIDE ERUPTED IN A DEVASTATING EXPLOSION.



MAGNIFICENT!
THAT'S PUT PAID
TO KAZONE FOR
A LONG TIME!


AND WITH
RESPECT, SIR, I THINK
IT SHOULD BE INCLUDED
IN THE GAS COMPANY'S
HONOURS!

SOMETHING LIKE
THE "CHARGE OF THE
LIGHT BRIGADE", EH,
CHARLIE?

THE MAIN EVACUATION WAS WELL UNDER WAY BY THE TIME THEY REACHED THE HARBOUR. BOTH TONY'S AND COOKY'S THOUGHTS WERE ALREADY WITH THE FUTURE ...

TONY, FOR A NON-COMBATANT, THAT LITTLE ACTION WASN'T BAD. YOU GOING BACK TO THE ORDONANCE ?

NO, COOKY. I'VE A GREAT RESPECT FOR THAT CORPS -- BUT IT'S BACK TO THE ARTILLERY FOR ME -- AND A BASH AT THE JERRIES WITH REAL GUNS !



FOR CAPTAIN TONY GIBBS HAD FINALLY REALISED THAT A TIME OF WAR WAS NO TIME FOR THE LUXURY OF A TOUCHY CONSCIENCE. A SOLDIER HAD TO FIGHT — OR DIE !

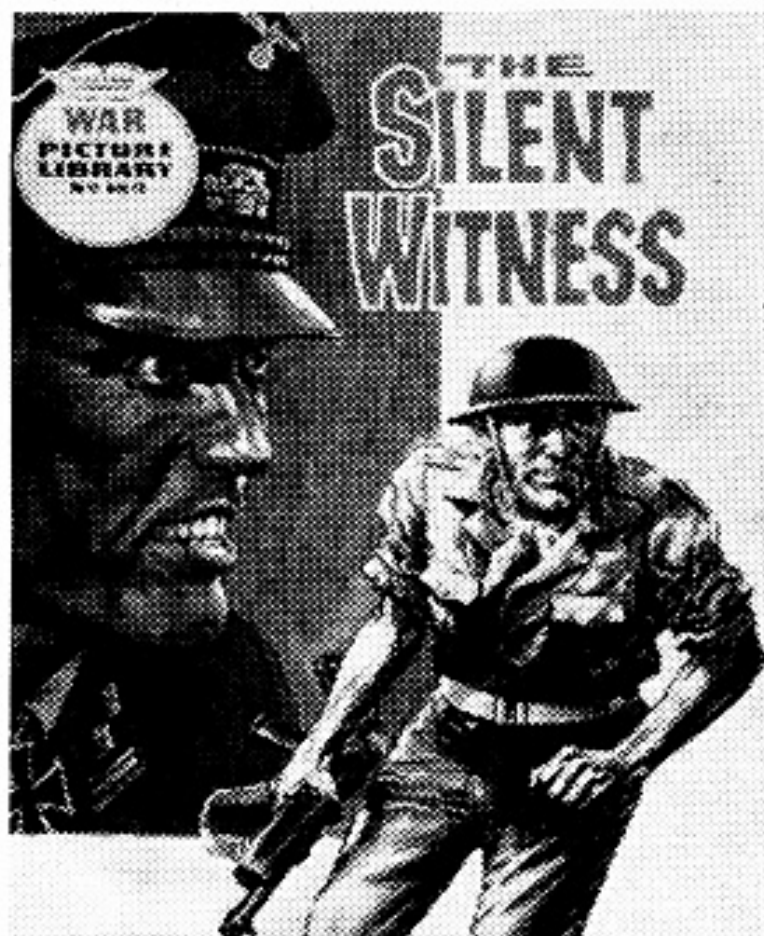
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